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Gentlemen

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1971
PLANNING APPLICATIONS NOS DA/86/0391 OUT AND DA/88/0336 OUT BY BLUE WATER PARK PLC TO DEVELOP WESTERN QUARRY AND ADJACENT LAND AT DARTFORD, KENT, AS A REGIONAL SHOPPING CENTRE

1. I am directed by the Secretary of State for the Environment to say that consideration has been given to the report of the Inspector Mr K G Smith B.Sc (Hons) MRTPI who held an inquiry into applications made by Blue Water Park PLC for planning permission to develop a regional shopping centre with recreational and leisure facilities and associated access roads including alterations to the existing highway network and 10,000 car parking spaces on land at Western Quarry and adjacent land at Dartford, Kent. The applications were made to Kent County Council. The Secretary of State has directed in pursuance of section 35 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 that the applications be referred to him for decision instead of being dealt with by the planning authority. It is noted that the first application, called in for decision by a letter of 21 October 1987, was withdrawn at the inquiry and the Secretary of State proposes to take no further action in respect of that application.

2. Concurrently with the inquiry, the Inspector also held an inquiry into objections to the Stopping Up of Highways (County of Kent) (No.) Order 19 , made under section 209 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971.

3. The Inspector, whose conclusions were reproduced in an Annex attached to the Department's letter of 14 December 1989, recommended that planning permission be refused and that the section 209 Order be not confirmed. A copy of his full report was enclosed with that letter.

4. The Department's letter of 14 December 1989 sets out the Secretary of State's reasons for proposing to disagree with the Inspector's recommendation to refuse planning permission. In particular it draws attention to the Secretary of State's proposal, published on 14 December 1989, to further modify Policy MGB3 of the submitted Alterations to the Kent Structure Plan, to enable the boundaries of the Green Belt in North West Kent to be revised to allow for a regional shopping centre. A copy of the proposed modification was enclosed together with a copy of the accompanying Statement of Reasons.